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WAR THOUGHTS

BY THEODORE S. WOOLSEY

DAY by day in these autumn days of 1914 one's mind turns inevitably to the tremendous happenings abroad, studying their causes, learning their progress, speculating as to their results. One can write of nothing else, because one can think of nothing else. Six months ago I could not believe Germany rash enough to measure her strength and Austria's against the land power of France and Russia, against the navies of France and Britain, against the wealth and resources of the Entente. Yet now one sees, given Germany as she is, how inevitably it had to come; one sees how certainly the ambition of one State for greater power and wider territory will be resisted by the other States most nearly threatened. Let us state this Balance of Power principle in its simplest terms. Here are three related States, A, B, and C; A waxes so strong, so ambitious, as to threaten the existence of B or C; B and C are impelled by the necessity of self-defense to combine and pull A down. As a result C may in turn grow in power and be swayed by a similar desire; then A and B in like manner unite to check her. Thus it was with Athens, Thebes, and Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. So, too, Spain, the Pope, and Venice combined against the aggression of France in the early sixteenth century, and presently Venice found herself thwarted by the same great principle; Louis XIV. was checked by it; Napoleon was overthrown by it; the Crimean War was an example of it. Every State which desired a better "place in the sun" at the expense of its neighbors has had to reckon with it. The Balance of Power principle is an accepted part of the fundamental policy of Europe. But it was not held to apply to sea power nor to commercial greatness. And one Continent only felt its working.

There came a time when the Balance of Power principle seemed obsolete. In three wars, 1864, 1866, 1870, Prussia proved her right to German leadership, built up a powerful German Empire, greatly enlarged its borders, and won the first place in Europe. To preserve what it had gained, and maintain

the *status quo*, a balancing of alliances was introduced into European politics, a triple alliance *vs.* a dual alliance which later became a triple entente. These were based upon the same old necessity of self-defense, but the Balance of Power idea was lost sight of. Space is wanting to describe this development. It did not satisfy. The onlooking States in these recent years have seen the growth of a German military machine so perfect and so mighty as to fill them with fear for their own safety. Now and then the sword was rattled in its scabbard to emphasize the demands of German statesmen or to secure something good for German allies, since allies must be paid for their sacrifices. The creation of a powerful navy supplemented the military growth. But this was not all. Her anxious and watchful neighbors have also seen the upspringing of a political philosophy in Germany which frankly threatened the integrity of the whole European structure. Room to expand; woe to the weak; the future is for the strong man armed: such was the strong meat fed to a simple and naturally gentle people until it turned the brain. Such was the ominous doctrine preached by soldier, historian, statesman, backed by huge army increase, war Zeppelins, strategic railways, Dreadnoughts, by all the tremendous enginery of war. Was it meaningless? Is it aimed at me or me? So each State asked itself in turn, and armed itself in response. The very perfection of the war machine, the philosophy which confused might and right, the truculence of a military caste whose prejudices and interests warped the national good sense, how inevitably when the day came these found themselves confronted by a European coalition, by eight States in arms and six more in sympathy with them. It is the Balance of Power principle again, revived because it is fundamentally right and vitally needed. But it is revived with this difference, that now sea power is included, and the Asiatic Continent. It has become a world-wide principle.

Let us go a step further. Suppose, as a result of the Great War, that the Allies are triumphant and Germany humiliated. Suppose in years to come Russia so powerful and so minded as in turn to threaten the peace and independence of Europe. Then again we should see a combination: Sweden, Germany, France, England, and others united against Russia, the Balance of Power principle operative once more.

But must this Old World ever pursue this bloody round?
Yes, unless the world disarms.

THEODORE S. WOOLSEY.